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ABSTRACT

Rogers (1970) suggests that group therapy may be both safer and far more effective than individual counseling and therapy in achieving conditions which encourage learning and personal growth. There are many "how to's" and "do's and don'ts" which will ameliorate conditions for creating learning, or problem solving, groups. The author delineates many of those conditions in this paper along with some requisite dimensions of leader behavior, number behavior, and group process. (Author/HMV)

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REALITY THERAPY IN LEARNING GROUPS

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I. Learning Objectives

1. List and briefly explain Rotter's four major conditions for learning to occur.
2. Be able to list and briefly relate the relevance of the four most important essentials necessary for group interaction:
 - A. Honesty
 - B. Responsibility
 - C. Interpersonal attractions (friends)
 - D. Trust and Confrontation
3. Briefly explicate the importance of a learning contract.
4. On a true-false test, be able to answer with about 80% accuracy, the do's and don'ts for learning group leaders, and be able to discern group ground rules.
5. Be able to state every time that the focus of the group is on the individual.

II. Organizing Concept

A thinking person oriented toward problem-solving is able to make rational choices which result in behaviors which stimulate self-esteem, gain knowledge about oneself, obtain love, enhance existence or being, and eventually perhaps aid the person in reaching Maslow's "B-Values" or self-actualization.¹ Reality-oriented group process can help free people to think and to solve problems, thereby facilitating fulfillment of their basic psychological needs. The generalized personal qualities of autonomy, spontaneity and problem solving skills are all conducive to enjoying life, giving and getting love, gaining self-esteem, and having happy thoughts. Helping people achieve these qualities constitute desired outcomes in learning and/or personal growth groups. Rogers (1970) suggests that groups may be both safer and far more effective than individual counseling and therapy in achieving conditions which encourage learning and personal growth. There are many "how to's" and do's and don'ts which will augment conditions for creating learning or problem solving groups. Some requisite dimensions of leader behavior, member behavior, and group process are discussed on the following pages.

III. A Social Learning Concept of Behavior Change

Rotter's (1954) model of social learning (see Section 2 on Locus of Control) outlines the following major conditions:

1. The potential for the behavior to occur
2. The expectancy that these behaviors will lead to a given reinforcement in a given situation
3. the value of the reinforcement in that situation which is the object of the behavior
4. the psychological situation in which the behavior reinforcement sequence occurs

These four major conditions have several significant implications for the instructor concerned with the development of "personhood" or self-actualization. A focus on the specifics of these implications follows:

Condition 1 - The potential for the behavior to occur. The potency of this statement could be summed in the notion that the only types of organisms that aren't behaving are dead ones. One may further assume that there is no truth in the statement, "John isn't motivated". The grand implication is that every person can do many things and no matter how seemingly hopeless a person may appear to be, behaviorally speaking, he can change and grow. However behavior is established, it is modified by learning, and what has been learned may be first unlearned and then relearned. Hopefully, educators will place confidence in the fact that students can change and then create conditions under which students will change.

Condition 2 - The expectancy that these behaviors will lead to a given reinforcement in a given situation. The essential point is that every behavioral act has a consequence. Further, people learn to expect these consequences or payoffs but differ in their beliefs about whether or not they have direct control over these payoffs. These differencing beliefs clearly influence behavior and will largely determine the person's movement toward actions which will create new or different consequences.

Condition 3 - The value of the reinforcement in that situation which is the object of the behavior. Briefly, the learner places worth on the outcome, result, or consequence of a behavior. The higher the learner values the outcome, the greater the likelihood that the person will act in such a way as to attain that consequence. Hence, the value of students being involved with the development of a course or unit of study and the accompanying rationale. Students want to see the personal relevance of a learning objective.

Condition 4 - The psychological situation in which the behavior reinforcement sequence occurs. Trust and confidence are primary ingredients for an environment stimulating behavior change. Every learner has a wide variety of past learning experiences. They have had at least some learning experiences in which instructors or other persons have manipulated payoff arbitrarily or conditionally. Learners are justifiably wary of dishonesty in the persons and systems delivering educational services. This is particularly true of students with educational deficiencies, and of many minority students.

The essential challenge of the social learning experience directed towards behavior change is to help the learner focus on the relationship between action (what she is doing) and consequences (what she is getting out of it). The payoff must have value for the learner. The instructor must earn the learner's confidence in the trustworthiness of the instructor and the context within which the learning behavior is to occur.

IV. Building a Learning Group

A. Group Size

Clinical experience suggests caution with setting fast rules on group size. Age of clients, verbal facility, and group purpose all influence group size. There is a direct relationship between age and group size. Younger students need smaller groups and more opportunities for active participation. However, students who talk little may possess few verbal communication skills, in which case they need larger groups with more opportunity to withdraw and not participate. Instructors wishing to engage in individual and group problem solving may with practice, operate successfully with a total class as a group. Instructors in the Advancement Studies Program at Southeastern Community College, Whiteville, North Carolina, ran very successful problem solving groups with their entire class. Glasser and Iverson (1966) describe situations where they worked with 30 to 50 delinquent girls in a group. They would hold meetings daily for two hours duration and on an indefinite basis.

Desired air time can be used as another guideline in determining size. I strongly suggest that in planning for good group experiences, one should allow a minimum of two hours of "air" time per participant. For example, in a college course that meets for a total of 48 contact hours, no more than 24 students should be enrolled in the total class.

B. Group Homogeneity

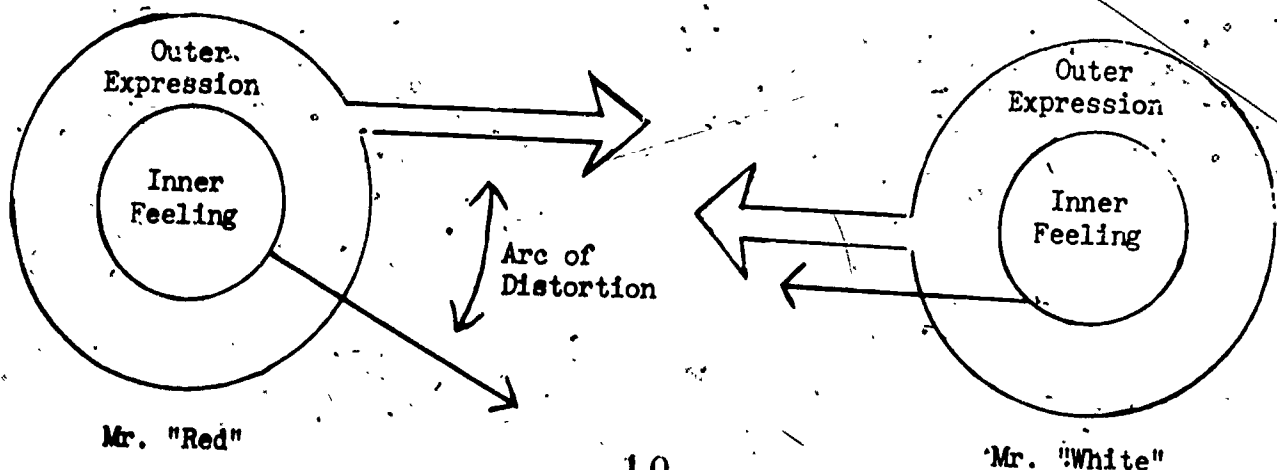
Counselors and instructors debate homogeneity and heterogeneity with respect to sex and nature of the problems. My personal experience suggests heterogeneity of sex for learning groups of adolescents or young adults. However, where monosexual groups are imposed by institutional structure, groups apparently function effectively. However, general problem areas with adolescents typically center around alienation, authority, and psychosexual development. I believe these problems are best aired and solved in heterosexual groups. Generally, heterogeneity with respect to the nature of problems, sex of members, communication skills, and intellectual and motor skills seems to enhance functional effectiveness of groups which are learning and problem-solving oriented.

C. Forming Pairs and Encouraging Communication

Primary among the psychological conditions of social learning and, in particular, helping the learner develop confidence in the learning situation, are variables associated with building a friendship. The primary requirement is: "Help folks to find and make a friend." Develop trust, warmth, and personal responsibility (each group member keeps social agreements). Get each person to leave the other person's mind alone. No one plays psychologist or psychoanalyst:

no mind reading. The presence of trust, friendship, and love between individuals within pairs provides the opportunity for group members to begin to achieve many humanistic goals (Rogers, 1969, 1962). Groups provide a higher probability than individual therapy of everyone making a friend or finding a "helping relationship".²

As a group leader, start your group by encouraging helpful communication between two persons. Trust and purposeful self-disclosure appear to be key considerations in the process of making friends. These processes decrease the likelihood of persons sending double messages like saying, "I'm not sad!", while tears are flowing down the cheeks of an obviously frowning and "down in the mouth" person. Double messages occur when people attempt to hide personal data. A typical fear is, "If they know me, they won't like me". The fear is generally not valid. In fact, self-disclosure, or the sharing of data about oneself, breaks the double message and begins to build trust and positive regard. Helpful or "therapeutic" communication is open, honest communication which avoids double messages, expressed as an "arc of distortion" and illustrated in Figure A.



The person of Mr. Red is making one statement to Mr. White but feeling another. Mr. White is saying what he feels. He is congruent, consistent, honest, sincere, and helpful. Mr. Red will have trouble gaining Mr. White's trust, and will experience difficulty making friends until he can follow Mr. White's model and become more direct and open.

Communication occurs through various methods and media.

We send messages out and receive them in from many separate sources, using a myriad of combinations of these sources. Generally we use a blend of verbal and non-verbal communications. Most people use body language--posture, position, muscle tone, voice tone, dress, eye movement, and eye contact. When people pick up distortion in any dialogue, it usually means that the words are saying one thing and the body another. The challenge of learning groups and therapy groups is to create the psychological situation within which people will honestly communicate, their voices and bodies sending the same messages. Under such conditions, the energy available for the support of the learning process becomes enormous by comparison with situations where people are confronted by the "arc of distortion".

Apparently, our society has normalized attitudes of criticism and alienation. Human needs are for love (warmth) and involvement (intimacy), yet sometimes we fear most that which we most ardently desire. Consequently, thinking to protect ourselves, we learn to avoid closeness and success through petty deceptions, closedness, and unwarranted privacy. In a sociological sense, we experience anomie or alienation. In the words of Eric Berne (1964), we play games with

ourselves and our closest associates by hiding honest thinking and feelings. We avoid the "here and now". People seem to avoid honesty, intimacy, spontaneity, autonomy-awareness, and self-governance by dwelling in the "then and there". In order to establish positive conditions for making friends, a learning group leader should decide to help individuals cut through games by being honest with each other. The leader should also help the group focus on "here and now" events. Personal growth, new learning, and behavior change will follow the development of friendship in the "here and now" relationships. Old learnings of group members--games, habits, and failure patterns--provide consistent blockage in the process of making friends. Thus, any learning group will be effective only to the extent to which the leader can facilitate making friends through game-free "here and now" dialogue, or open and honest communication. Group members must be honest with each other, engage in problem solving behavior and form a vital and open friendship with at least one other person in the group.

D. Group Climate

After each person in a group has at least one friend, trust and interpersonal attraction (positive feeling for each other) emerge as qualities which enable conditions for furthering effective group work. Trust is developed mostly by just being together and following the ground rules of honesty, self-disclosure, and "here and now" relevant responding (reacting directly to what has been said) in all meaningful dialogue. For example, if someone says to you, "John, will you have

lunch with me?", you would reply, "yes" or "no" or "maybe Tuesday", but not, "I've really been busy lately" or "Do you like tomato soup?". The latter process is sometimes called faulting.

Faulting generally contributes to the deterioration of growth enhancing relationships, and tends to create distrust. Trust is formed through disclosure, honesty, and relevant responses. Trust builds a foundation upon which the learning process occurs.

Internalized behavior change will probably occur only in a person who experiences a climate of trust, and when confronted with

dissonance producing feedback from a trusted person. Confrontation without a climate of trust will lead to either: (1) conformity -- if the group leader has power; or (2) flight or fight -- if the group leader has no power. Both are undesirable. Trust without confrontation usually leads to identity relationships but not necessarily to internalized change (Smith, 1973).

Interpersonal attraction (group cohesiveness) becomes essential for a group in which learning is stressed. I believe most persons leading groups can build interpersonal attraction simply by applying everything they have ever learned about making friends. Essentials are simple honesty, consistency, caring and responsibility. The humanistic psychology movement has produced literally hundreds of structured exercises which help people make friends and might be useful to a leader who was experienced with them and felt comfortable using them. I am in favor of using some well designed structural

exercises on an as-needed basis providing the group and the leader are comfortable with such exercises. They are not essential for a helpful group experience.

I do strongly suggest leader modeling by setting positive norms and saying positive, honest, and specific things to other persons. What you say as a leader you must actually feel. Also, you will be more successful in getting across a positive message if you send concrete and specific messages. Say, "I like your blue scarf", rather than, "I think you're beautiful". The latter is too general and not too believable. The specific comment is more objective, believable by the other person, and gets away from "crystal ball gazing". A person who expects to fail is termed a failure identifier because they see themselves as failures. They usually don't feel beautiful! When you over-generalize by saying to one of them, "you're beautiful!", you lose your creditibility in his or her eyes.

V. Group Leadership

The purpose of the group is to help individual growth. Counselors and instructors should assume an authoritative role on behavior change. They should control and lead the group, channel communications, and limit disruptive factors like individual domination, resistance, and group mores violation. Yet, the counselor and instructor should not assume full responsibility for successful group operation. Every group member should become a co-counselor and assume responsibilities for maintaining ground rules. For many

students, the peer counselor may well have the most impact for problem solution, planning and subsequent control of member behavior through auditing of that behavior. Peers may well provide the most effective reinforcements, motives, and support crucial to behavioral change. Counselors and instructors remain in charge to insure a helpful process, but are not the only helpful persons in the group.

What a person's theory bias is, e.g., client-centered, Gestalt, transactional analysis, reality therapy, determines many guidelines and ground rules for group process. I am writing as a reality therapy practitioner, yet I believe that conditions for building positive human relationships are reasonably universal. Involvement, honesty, responsibility, respect, congruence, positive regard and acceptance are all appropriate and necessary conditions in group work. These qualities are briefly defined:

1. Group leaders must become involved with members and members with leaders.
2. Honesty -- giving and sharing all the facts.
3. Responsibility -- making and keeping simple agreements.
4. Respect -- the kind of love that leads one to intervene in the life of another as a helper, even if at times your help is refused or not wanted.
5. Congruence -- be open and honest in expressing your feelings.
6. Positive regard -- each person has worth and you really believe it.
7. Acceptance -- people have worth and you assist them and try to work with them even if their value systems violate yours.

The good group leader exudes warmth but avoids being maudlin. Through his relationships with the group and individuals, he infuses new life into effete persons. She devises ways to transmit strength (hers or others) to needy persons. A leader is never submissive and a group never survives anarchy. Group members are expected to support the same principles of group function and goals as are the leader. The focus of the group is on individual goals. The question, "What do you want for yourself?", is frequently raised, periodically negotiated, and is a key step to learning contracts mutually acceptable to leader and learner alike. (See this chapter, section VII)

VI. Membership Behavior and Roles

Group members participate actively in problem solving activities. Good group members adhere to group mores, avoid monopoly of group process, and support, accept, and confront other group members. They assume responsibility for their own behavior, accept group controls; and attempt to set and realize responsible goals or objectives for personal growth. As noted, good membership means adherence to problem solving efforts, support of others, group maintenance, and adherence to group ground rules. The latter may vary, but usually include regular attendance and active commitment to remain throughout a session, as well as other behaviors stated or implied in the concepts already outlined.

Counseling groups may begin as member groups (being enrolled or on the roster), but must become reference groups ("This is my group. These are my people, I value their opinions.") In

reference groups members base critical decisions on group expectations and reactions as well as their personal inclinations. Most critical, personal decisions must be referenced in terms of group and leader reaction if the counseling group is to have impact on individual behavior.

Individual involvement and making the group into a reference group are characterized by emotional crises - tears, sobs, anger, self-disclosure, resolution of confrontation - and responsible group participation. Curiously, involvement with the leader and specific group members occurs similarly and could probably be measured in degree by counting the frequency and intensity of transitions like crying, laughing, and self-disclosure, as well as the number of successful plans made and carried out.

A final word on responsibility of group members. Behavior change doesn't occur in a vacuum. As stated previously, whether learned or instinctual, behavior is modified by learning. To be useful, learning must in some way be applied in order to yield fruits for the learner. Agreeing to behave in new ways and trying out the new ways is an essential aspect of group process. The group becomes teacher, brother, sister, mother, father, judge, jury, defense, prosecution, minister - an active influence with specific goals for specific people. The greatest therapeutic gain will be made by individuals who make and keep agreements or carry out their plans.

VII. Learning Contract

Learning contracts made in the group setting constitute the support arm of the change process. They seem to vary in dimension from general to specific. The more that learning contracts are related to understanding personal dynamics, the less useful they seem to be.

The more they relate to making decisions and concrete formulations of behavioral plans, the more effective they become. Providing you have established some trust and rapport and the person who wants help has asked you to oversee their problem solving, you can sometimes foster success by posing somewhat pointed self-study questions.

Helping a person to focus on his operating decisions or psychological constructs is difficult. But helping a person to discover the relationship between the payoff of pain which he is experiencing as a result of his past decisions, and to discover his ability to control subsequent behavior for better payoffs constitutes one of the most difficult and meaningful steps towards helping him realize his learning needs.

The person has systematic ways of gaining payoffs which can be either beneficial and rewarding or hurtful and punishing. One series of questions designed to stimulate focused thought and found to be useful by practitioners of Transactional Analysis (TA) is directed at interpersonal assumptions. These questions are:

1. What kind of person are you?
2. What experiences in life led you to be the person that you are?
3. From these experiences, what decisions about your your life did you make?

4. Which of these decisions led to the difficulties you are now experiencing?
5. In order to be the kind of person you want to be, which decision must you change?
6. Which decisions will you change?
7. How will you and I know that you have made these changes? Express in simple behavioral terms.

An alternative approach to uncovering the private psychological logic is to use the logic sequence of:

I am _____ (example: afraid)
 (your worst feeling)

That if I _____ (example: trust you)

I will _____ (example: be abandoned)

Instead of _____ (example: loved)

So I will _____ (example: take care of your fear so that you can take
 care of me and love me)

Both of these processes require skill, patience, thought and caution, but sometimes set the stage for meaningful behavioral contracting.³ The facilitating person or persons and the problem-solving person must make the plans and contracts most likely to be followed and kept by her. Mink (1970, 1974) describes processes for developing behavioral contracts. They are briefly summarized in item 18 under the section in this paper titled "Do's and Don'ts for Learning Group Leaders".

VIII. Outcomes

Through group process and new behavior learning, unloved people can learn to love, enjoy life, restore self-esteem, solve problems, establish realistic levels of aspiration, and eliminate destructive behaviors. Success expectancy develops. People become more realistic, are able to make functional plans and thus succeed. Problem solving skills are acquired. Responsibility and honesty are experienced, practiced, and accepted in personal and interpersonal endeavors. These attainments can lead to employment, stable marriages, the surmounting of educational deficits, and similar universal goods. All in all, able management of effective learning groups can be a viable aid in the remedy of many personal deficiencies apparent in the people of our society.

IX. Membership Ground Rules for Learning Groups and Group Counseling

1. Discuss the concept of honesty as "making pertinent information available for problem solving." For example, if you know of a solution that worked for you or someone else, share it. Get commitment to honesty from each group member.
2. Discuss and get a commitment from each group member to the concept of responsibility. Define responsibility as making and keeping simple agreements. Point out that no one has to make a commitment or contract; but if they do, expect them to keep it.
3. No psychologists, i.e., no mind readers.

4. Don't play archaeologist--let sleeping dogs lie. Don't delve into the past for information which is not relevant to the problem being solved.
5. One person talks at a time. Extra activities during group meetings, such as side conversations or reading are not permitted.
6. No name calling. Discussion should not be offensive to individual members of the group--that is, no personal insults or deliberate use of vulgarity. On the other hand, there should be no flat rules to the effect that occasional use of such terms will automatically lead to expulsion from the group. Members will be asked to use language which is comfortable to them, but the group leader will confront and process deliberate name calling.
7. No topics are specifically forbidden. Any discussion which leads to thinking and problem solving is a good discussion. However, topics do not need to be personal. Topics which the persons in group counseling sessions talk about may cover a gamut of areas such as school (teachers and routines), personal problems (sex, marriage, family living), subject matter, and the work area (jobs, bosses, pay). There is practically no limit to the more personalized aspects of such questions that the alert counselor or instructor can draw out for beneficial discussion for the group.
8. Disciplinary action will not be taken for information revealed in the meeting unless this information has to go with security of person or property. "We won't protect you for breaking the law." Make the latter clear at the beginning of the group.
9. All members should be required to attend meetings unless they are excluded medically.
10. In general, no member will be permitted to leave the group while the meeting is in progress.
11. No gross physical encounter should be allowed and absolutely no physical abuse.
12. Members presenting unacceptable behavior in the group will be asked to leave the meeting.
13. Neither staff nor members should make retribution later for information revealed in the group meeting. All members should understand that problem solving started in the group meeting should be completed in the group meeting. Subgroup planning is acceptable.
14. In general, the meeting should end when it is scheduled to end. Sometimes, however, the leader may be convinced that the meeting should continue until certain material is resolved. In these cases, the meeting could be continued for a reasonable length of time, or until the time that is scheduled for the evaluation critique.

15. All staff observers and visitors (if any) will be required to attend a post-meeting critique.
16. Other rules may be devised as appropriate to the group and its setting.
17. If more than one staff person is involved in the meetings, schedule pre- and post-sessions with all the staff persons and plan as well as process the meeting.
18. When confronted, a member cannot refuse to fight. For example, one cannot remain silent when asked a question. Saying, "I choose not to respond," is a response.
19. No filibustering.
20. If an argument is about a matter of opinion, it must be so recognized.
21. If an argument is about a matter of fact, you must get the facts.
22. Fight about only one thing at a time. Changing the subject before an issue is settled is a defensive maneuver.
23. Members must respond in a relevant way to any questions asked or to a previous point before making another unrelated comment.

X. Do's and Don'ts for Learning Group Leaders

1. Often you should allow the group to select the subject to be discussed.
2. Encourage the group to set its own limitations.
3. Generally reflect most questions back to the group.
4. Encourage group members to say what they feel by reflecting feeling back rather than by arguing against them or criticizing.
5. Maintain an accepting but neutral role, avoiding agreement or disagreement with strong feelings expressed by group members.
6. The leader (or other staff members) should participate, but not too often.
7. The leader (or other staff members) should express true feelings also.
8. With total group assistance, enforce all ground rules.
9. Don't be a lecturer or deliver "sermonettes."

10. Don't cut off communications by being so defensive that people are afraid to talk to you. Consider personal references as any other material.
11. Avoid asking individuals direct personal (historical) questions or making strong decisive judgmental statements.
12. Don't insist upon conclusions to subjects discussed...let it "soak".
13. Don't criticize group feelings, no matter how much yours differ.
14. Don't identify with antisocial or distorted feelings. Simply recognize feelings.
15. Don't allow one or two members to either disrupt or continuously dominate the group.
16. Don't be an archaeologist or a psychologist. Excursions into past history drain from the "here and now" and inhibit learning. Interpretation or misreading is poor modeling for problem solving.
17. Don't demand anything from the group members that you aren't willing to do or give yourself.
18. If you have confidence that you have a trust relationship established, be confronting by asking the what questions:
 - (1) What are you doing?
 - (2) If you continue what you're doing, what will happen (consequence)?
 - (3) Is that what you want (value judgement)?
 - (4) If not, what are you willing to do for yourself (plan)?
 - (5) Do you agree with and are you committed to this plan?Remember, if the plan fails: no excuses, no punishment, repeat #1-5.
19. Staff members do not need to discuss their personal lives but could promote trust by revealing themselves--at least a little.

XI. A. Notes

1. Maslow broadened and specified his definition of self-actualization in his last writings which were published posthumously by his wife, Bertha, under the title The Farther Reaches of Human Nature (New York: The Viking Press, 1971). See Chapter 9 and Table 3 in particular (pp. 318-319). In Chapter 9 he describes the B values, and in Table 3 he contrasts the B (being) - Values and specific metapathologies. These B values are also discussed in Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1964 paperback edition, New York: The Viking Press, 1970). I list about sixteen from my reading of Maslow. Thirteen are "his" and three come from Eastern philosophies like Buddhism. However, they are all tossed about in Western culture even though seldom attained. They are:

Truth - Honesty
Goodness - Generosity
Beauty
Unity - Wholeness
Dichotomy - Transcendence
Aliveness
Uniqueness
Perfection
Completion
Justice - Order
Simplicity
Richness
Effortlessness
Playfulness
Self-Sufficiency
Meaningfulness

2. Some of the personal qualities essential in forming "helping relationships" are presented in Table One, p. 22, titled "Self Appraisal".
3. Please be aware that these questions and steps are considered to be inappropriate for "pure" Reality Therapy. I believe that they are sometimes useful in the context of establishing a learning contract. They should be used sparingly and only to help a person think through a good learning contract.

XI

B:

Directions: Circle the digit which comes closest to describing you:

1. How authentic am I? Am I fully aware and congruent within myself?

1 2 3 4 5 6
Low Average High

2. How expressive am I? Do I communicate ambiguously to others?

1 2 3 4 5 6
 Low Average High

3. How positive am I in my warmth, caring, and respect for the other member

1 2 3 4 5 6
Low. Average High

4. Am I strong enough to be separate, respecting my own needs and feelings?

1 2 3 4 5 6
Low Average High

5. Am I secure enough to permit others their full separateness?

1 2 3 4 5 6
Low Average High

6. How fully can I enter into the private worlds of others, sensing meaning and feelings with no desire to judge, to evaluate, to praise, to criticize, to explain or to alter them?

1 2 3 4 5 6
Low Average High

7. Can I relate so that the others feel me to be in no way a threat and so that they become less fearful of external evaluation from anyone?

1 2 3 Average 4 5 High 6

8. Do I encounter others as becoming, rather than as fixed (not by the past to be appraised, or diagnosed)?

1 2 3 4 5 6
Low Average High

9. How clearly is my own self-image one of change, development, growth, emergency?

1 2 3 4 5 6
Low Average High

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~~PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES FOR GROUP LEADERS~~
(Extracted in part from Glasser's Reality Therapy)

1. Aspirations of Group Members

Assume that every member of the group has the following basic needs or drives whether or not he recognizes or reveals them:

- a. To have affection for and from others.
- b. To feel worthwhile to himself and to others.

2. Relationships with the Group Members

Probably the most important influence you may have upon the group will be your ability to establish the following relationships with each member:

- a. Direct empathy, the ability to perceive each member's problems and values from his point of view or position.
- b. Positive involvement, demonstrating true interest, concern, and regard in each member's welfare.
- c. Genuineness, communicating your honest thought and feelings without pretense, guile or superficiality.

3. Principles for Practice

- a. Be personal, subjective, not detached or objective.
- b. Be yourself.
- c. Use 1st person pronouns, "I" and "me."
- d. Concentrate on here and now, not on childhood, high school, hometown, etc.
- e. Concentrate on behavior, not emotions, feelings, sentiment.
- f. Ask "what" not "why." To ask why is to accept explanations and excuses.
- g. Have members identify and evaluate their behavior. Ask: "Is it doing you any good in what you really want to do?" Get opinions of other members.
- h. Members should plan changes in their behavior.
- i. Have members state commitment to try, and be responsible for, new behavior with no excuses.

- j. Express praise and reinforcement for constructive and responsible actions and changes in behavior.
- k. Encourage all members to express opinions, reactions and to share.
- l. Be patient. Give members time to act and react, particularly at the beginning of each meeting.

4. Discussion Suggestions

Begin with a self-introduction and description. Then explain your role as the group leader. Point out the need for mutual confidence and trust.

Emphasize permissiveness and group freedoms.

Have each member introduce and describe himself and why he is there.

Discussion topics (to be encouraged from group members) may include problems associated with use of leisure time, course grading, instruction, vocational and educational goals, student government, dating, dances, recreation, the "draft," residences, and test-taking. Please insure that "study habits" are fully discussed at one or more early meetings.

Prolonged griping should be discouraged.

Each problem should be discussed in terms of:

- a. What do you want out of the situation?
- b. What do you do about it?
- c. What does this do for you?
- d. How do other members cope with this?
- e. What can you do about it? Get a commitment to follow-up in subsequent meetings. Give, and gain group member, support for efforts to try new behavior.